NPS Form 10-900 OMB No. 1024-0018 (Expires 5/31/2012)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

SENT TO D.C.
7-8-12

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form.* If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name Laurent, Kenneth and Phyllis, House

other names/site number

2. Location

street & number 4646 Spring Brook Rd ☐ not for publication

city or town Rockford ☐ vicinity

state Illinois code 012 county Winnebago code 201 zip code 61114

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide X local

Anne E Haaker DSHPO 7-6-12
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official Date

Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

___ entered in the National Register
___ determined eligible for the National Register
___ determined not eligible for the National Register
___ removed from the National Register
___ other (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Laurent, Kenneth and Phyllis, House
Name of Property

Winnebago County IL
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- [x] private
- [ ] public - Local
- [ ] public - State
- [ ] public - Federal

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box.)

- [x] building(s)
- [ ] district
- [ ] site
- [ ] structure
- [ ] object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	district
0	0	site
0	0	structure
0	0	object
1	0	**Total**

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Domestic/Single Dwelling

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Recreation and Culture/ Museum

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Modern Movement/Usonian

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Foundation: Concrete
walls: Brick and wood
roof: Tar and gravel
other: Copper

Narrative Description

Summary Paragraph

The Kenneth and Phyllis Laurent House is a single-story, hemicycle Usonian designed by Frank Lloyd Wright in 1949 and constructed between the years of 1951-1952. Built of Chicago Common Brick and Red Tidewater Cypress, the house hugs the property and blends flawlessly with its natural landscape. When the home was built, the lot was considered on the edge of town. The city of Rockford has since grown to surround the neighborhood, yet the area still retains its suburban feel with large wooded lots and curvilinear roads. The home is a fine local example of Wright's Usonian architecture and the hemicycle form.

Narrative Description

The Laurent Home

The Laurent home is located in an unincorporated neighborhood on Rockford, Illinois' near northeast side. The subdivision is a small island of county property totally surrounded by the City of Rockford. The neighborhood lies east of North Alpine and north of Spring Creek Road, two major arteries in the city. The immediate area surrounding the home is comprised of single-family homes built on large wooded lots; most of the lots are close to an acre in size and the majority of the homes were constructed between 1950 and 1970.

The irregular shaped lot, measuring approximately 1.3 acres, gently slopes down to a creek located at the rear of the property. Mature trees define the lot line and give the home a sense of privacy. The plantings nearer the home are not overly ornamental and are simply designed. There are a limited variety of groundcovers, Japanese maples, and yews. On either side of the Laurent home are one-story residential structures.

The home itself is approximately 2600 square feet. It is one-story and constructed of a rosy-hued Chicago Common Brick and Red Tidewater Cypress. Wright had originally specified limestone instead of the brick, but the cost was prohibitive. The Red Tidewater Cypress makes an excellent choice for exterior application. Oil called cypressene is found in this species and gives the wood natural waterproofing qualities. Wright used this type of cypress for a number of his commissions including the Haynes House in Indiana, the Krauss House in Missouri, and Auldbrass in South Carolina.

The house has a flat, tar and gravel roof. A wide fascia, painted a redwood color, is found below the roofline and is accented by a wide copper drip edge. The home has deep overhanging eaves and the underside is plastered and colored the same as the interior ceilings. This gives the appearance that the ceiling extends through the walls to the outside. Recessed square light boxes, trimmed in Red Tidewater Cypress, are located intermittently along the length of the eaves. The home has two large chimneys. The central chimney sits above the roofline and is visible from the street. It has a wide copper drip edge similar to that used for the roof. The other chimney is an end-wall stack found on the east side of the master bedroom.

There are a variety of different shaped and sized windows found throughout the house. All are single light with Red Tidewater Cypress frames. Some of the Laurent house windows are stationary, and some are casement. The windows that open have interior screens and are arranged so as to create cross ventilation, keeping the home cool in the summer months.

The driveway, once gravel but now asphalt, forms a loop with an entrance and an exit on Spring Brook Road. On the west side of the drive, a long low brick wall hugs the site and then juts out to form a right angle around a guest-parking pad. A large scale Arts and Crafts lantern is mounted to the brick half-wall and illuminates the driveway's entrance. The fixture is based on Wright's original drawing and was built and installed in 2005. The east side of the drive is a gentle berm landscaped with pachysandra and evergreens. The slope acts as a buffer to road noise and cold winds, and almost obscures the view of the home from the road.

The main entrance to the home is under the two-car carport. The home's roof is cantilevered to the east to form the roof of the carport. Wright generally used a carport instead of a garage in his Usonian home designs. The Laurent's carport space is simple and includes an enclosed tool closet and a storage area for refuse. There is also a floor-to-ceiling sculptural light fixture near the home's entrance. The cascading wooden light is very similar to those found throughout Taliesin in Spring Green. It is said that Wright liked using the Japanese-inspired design for the indirect light it provided. Around the corner, near the entrance, is a red glazed tile inscribed with the architect's initial. A similar signature tile can be found on a limited number of Mr. Wright's noteworthy projects.

The Laurent home is a mixture of shapes but the most dominant form is the arc. Wright called this design a hemicycle. The Laurent home was Wright's first single-story hemicycle design in the nation. Besides its unique shape, the home also incorporates a number of energy-saving features, although it is debatable whether it can be called a "solar-hemicycle." A fifty-five foot curved wall of floor-to-ceiling glass faces northwest and provides passive solar heat in the

winter months. In the summer, the wide overhanging eaves protect the home from direct light. French doors can be opened to create cross ventilation.

The house was laid out on a grid of three-foot squares. The intersection of two of the arcs in the house plan form one of the most striking features of the home, an outdoor terrace and garden area. In geometric terms, the area formed by two intersecting circles is known as a *vesca picisis* in Latin *or mandorla* in Italian. It has a variety of associations in religious symbolism, but one of the more common ones is "healing."

The foundation is a poured concrete slab set on crushed rock. The top layer of concrete was mixed with a deep red pigment. The finished product was scored according to the three foot square grid pattern and this serves as the finished outside walkway surrounding the home, as well as the interior floor. The continuity of the floor color and grid pattern adds to the feeling that the inside and outside are one continuous space.

Water pipes are laid 18 inches on center upon crushed rock and embedded in the home's floor to provide radiant heat. Written accounts state that Wright first encountered this system of heating in Japan. Later he began incorporating radiant heat in his Usonians. In his first Usonian, the Jacobs' house, Wright designed the system using steam. In his book, *Building with Wright*, Jacobs claims the early experiment was not very successful. According to Jacobs, the pressure of the installed system was not adequate for the size for the home. Wright later turned to forced hot water for the radiant floor heating systems with much better results (59).

Although it may go unnoticed, there is no threshold as you enter the Laurent home. The outdoor surface transitions seamlessly to the inside. The entire house is designed and built to be wheelchair accessible and a smooth transition from room to room is just one of a number of design features Wright incorporated. To the left of the entry is part of an addition built in the early 1960s. The hallway located here leads to a bathroom and bedroom. The addition was executed by Wright protégé, John Howe. The new section blends flawlessly with the original house. On the east side of the addition's hall is a continuous row of cabinets. The cabinets run about two-thirds the way up the wall. The top of the cabinets forms a long ledge. Three casement windows, located above the cabinets, bring natural light into the hallway. The hall also has overhead recessed lighting. The unique square light boxes were used throughout the house. They are trimmed in Red Tidewater Cypress and lined with metal. When illuminated, the combination of materials produces a beautiful warm glow in the evening. A full bath is part of the addition and a bedroom is located at the end of the hall. Like the original bedrooms in the home, there is both a built-in desk and vanity. One unique feature in this bedroom is a corner window that is inverted so that the corner comes into the room. Outside the window is a square built-in planter. The row of cabinets found in the hallway continues into the bedroom, appearing as an uninterrupted line. The hardware used on the windows, doors, and the many built-ins in the home is brass and was manufactured by National Lock. Mr. Wright specified piano hinges for all the cabinet doors. The low profile, continuous line of the hinges gives the wall of cabinet doors a sleek and seamless look. As an aside, Taliesin architects later turned to Mr. Laurent to provide them with hardware from National Lock for use in other projects. Curtains in the addition, and throughout the house, are hung from a metal channel mounted to the ceiling about two inches from the wall. Hardware sits in the channel allowing the curtains to easily glide in front of the windows or be pushed aside. This eliminates the need for curtain rods or blinds.

Inside the entry is the first glimpse of the Red Tidewater Cypress board and batten walls found throughout the house. The wood has a beautiful, golden glow. As you round the corner of the entrance hall, the main living space opens up. It is spacious and bathed in natural light. A hearth anchors the space at the southern end of the room. It is a large cantilevered fireplace constructed of the same color brick as the home's exterior. The fireplace wall is without decoration and has no mantle. It is partially open on one side and fully open on the front and other side. Inside the fireplace is a massive iron grate designed by Wright. The geometric lines of the grate are reminiscent of many of his windows. Mr. Wright designed nearly all of the furniture in the home. A built-in banquette runs along the eastern wall. The upholstered cushions have been recovered over the years, and Mr. Laurent admits the color scheme is a little more subdued than the original; however, the fabric is a soft salmon color and works well with the original fall-inspired tones. Some of the furniture still retains the original upholstery in shades of olive green, gold, orange, and deep red. At the end of the living room is a board and batten wall with shelves. The shelves are perfectly in line with the horizontal battens, again giving an uninterrupted plane for the eyes to follow.

Behind the wall is the kitchen workspace. The area is compact and well organized. The western wall of the kitchen has a pass through, so that food can easily be arranged on the buffet-style surface on the opposite side. With the 1960 expansion, the outside wall of the kitchen was bumped out to allow for a newly created dining area.

The end wall of the living room turns the corner to become the hall to the other two bedrooms. This passageway is probably the most striking area of the home. The hall is more like a room; Laurent asked Wright to design the hall wide enough so that he could turn his wheelchair around in the space. On the east side of the hall, beyond the buffet area and the first bedroom door, is a gently curving banquette with an upholstered seat. The seating appears to be floating, as the base is recessed. Two shelves are mounted above and run the length of the seat. Three wooden boxes appear to add support to the shelves, but they also hide recessed lighting. Tassel switches hang from the bottom shelf and Mr. Laurent,

or anyone else who sat on the bench, could easily pull the tassels for additional reading light. The banquette faces a concave curved wall of glass. Outside is the fishpond and terrace that make up the mandorla, the almond shaped space formed by the intersecting arcs of the house plan. The glass wall is fifty-five feet long and comprised of several sets of French doors alternating with stationary windows of glass. There is a door to the outside on each end. Mr. Laurent reported that his favorite place in the house was at the northern end of this hall, looking south. Here the curve of the glass wall is quite evident, especially at a sitting level. Wright designed the house for Mr. Laurent's comfort and enjoyment at the seated-level. Many visitors have commented that the home takes on a different feeling when you are viewing it from this position.

The Laurent's master bedroom was at the northern end of the house. This bedroom has an abundance of built-in cabinets and special features. On the eastern wall are cabinets with doors that pull down. This eliminates bulky and burdensome drawers. The bedroom features its own fireplace and a beautiful desk that extends from the wall of built-ins and wraps the corner of the fireplace. The desk's cantilevered design makes it easily accessible to the wheelchair. On the northern wall there are low shelves topped by three tall, narrow windows. Mirrors are mounted between and under the windows to serve as a built-in vanity. On the exterior facade of this wall, Wright brought the brickwork up to the roofline, and the only roofline facia is between the narrow windows. The western wall of the bedroom has a wide niche and the beds are set against a wooden headboard.

The bathroom is located between the master bedroom and the other original bedroom. The bathroom features a 44" by 44" open shower stall and separate soaking tub. The eastern wall is a part of a gentle arc. This is where the household washer and dryer are located. Wright designed the bathroom a little larger than normal and kept it open for maneuverability.

The home does have one set of stairs. These lead to a very small below-grade mechanical room where the water heater, boiler, pump, and water softener are located. This is the only sub-grade area of the home.

Alterations

Frank Lloyd Wright designed the Laurent house in 1949. Its construction lasted until 1952. Desiring more space for their growing family, the Laurents approached Mr. Wright in 1958 about designing an addition. Unfortunately, Mr. Wright died before the addition to the house could be built. Mr. Laurent states Wright began planning the project with them, but it was John Howe who provided the final plans and supervised the construction.

The additional bedroom wing was built in the space of the old carport. The original outer wall of the home became the inner wall of the addition's hall. This pushed the home's entrance out further and the carport was expanded. Since the original design used the same building materials inside and out, it is virtually impossible to discern this change. The new wing included the hall, a full bath and a bedroom.

When the bedroom wing was added, the Laurents decided they also wanted a dedicated space for a dining room table. In the original plan, Mr. Wright designed two nesting tables for dining and placed the table in the open living space directly across from the fireplace. The remodel pushed back the eastern wall of the kitchen area to create the new dining space. A door on one of the new walls allows another entrance to the carport. Again, the newly created area blends beautifully with the original space.

The Laurents chose to add neutral-colored plush carpet to most of the home. They consulted with John deKoven Hill before purchasing. In some areas it is wall-to-wall, but in other areas they left the floor exposed on the edges for a glimpse of the original red-colored concrete floor. As stated before, the Laurent's did reupholster some of the Wright-designed furniture and the banquettes.

Some additional downspouts were added to aid with roof drainage. It is generally recognized that Mr. Wright was not fond of the traditional gutter and downspout system. The Laurent house has copper downspouts extending out from under the deep eaves of the home, but they are left suspended and do not direct water all the way to the ground. A few of these had to be extended or redirected to shed the water away from the sidewalks.

The Laurents added air-conditioning, a luxury not readily available when the home was built. One wall-mounted unit cools the addition wing and another cools the Laurent's master bedroom. To aid in energy conservation and to reduce moisture condensation, the single-paned glass in the windows was replaced with thermal-paned glass. The original oil-fired boiler has been replaced by a gas-fueled version.

The original roof lasted for about 38 years. Mr. Laurent stated that in all that time, they never had a leak. A roofer told him that the life of the roof was 12-15 years at best, so Mr. Laurent decided it was time for a new one. He laughed that within 2 years, the new roof was leaking. Laurent had to make numerous repairs before the roof was again leak-free. The roof is again in need of some repairs, and the new Laurent House Foundation plans to address this.

It is important to note that the concept behind the Usonian was to provide a well designed home for those of average means. The homes were readily adaptable for expansion. Wright designed additions for a number of his Usonian

clients. In this way, families were able to continue living in their Usonian homes even as their families grew and their needs changed.

Integrity

The integrity of the Laurent house is excellent. The home remains in its original location with the original property still intact. Upon Mr. Wright's insistence, the home was built in a country setting. Over the years, Rockford has grown to encompass the neighborhood; however, it is amazing how the setting is still similar to when the home was built. This subdivision has remained unincorporated and retains a country-like feel. Even though it is near one of Rockford's busier streets, it is not unusual to see wild turkey and even deer in the yards. Most of the houses that were built around the Laurent home blend very well with their natural setting. The Laurent home was positioned on the lot in a way that continued to provide privacy for its owners even after the subdivision was developed.

Frank Lloyd Wright worked on plans for an addition to the Laurent House, but died before it could be carried out. In 1960, John Howe designed and oversaw the Laurent House addition. Howe was considered the famous architect's right-hand man. Many of the features from the original home were incorporated into the addition including the interior and exterior wall materials, poured concrete flooring, and casement windows. The Laurents made an effort to use authentic materials for repairs and worked hard to maintain the home's original materials. For example, each winter they covered the curved exterior brick wall of the terrace with plastic and clamps. The common brick used for the home's construction is very porous and the exposed wall tends to collect water. The plastic helped to prevent cracks in the wall from freezing and thawing during the harsh Northern Illinois winters. They also kept the exterior Red Tidewater Cypress cleaned and coated to give it the same beautiful coloring and appearance as when the home was built. Even with a few flaws in the roof draining system, the Laurents were consistent with Wright's method for shedding water. They avoided putting up traditional downspouts, even though this probably would have been an easier and less expensive option.

The home still exudes the same feeling today as when it was designed and built. The spacious openness of the house has been maintained, partially because the open floor plan was precisely what drew the Laurents to Mr. Wright in the first place. The Laurents were in touch with the Frank Lloyd Wright philosophy of letting the house speak for itself. In an interview, Mr. Laurent stated, "you will notice we don't have much in the way of art on the walls. That is because we don't need it." He referred to the three windows in the couple's master bedroom as his Japanese prints. The long narrow windows frame the view of nature so perfectly.

The connection to Frank Lloyd Wright is clear the moment you walk into the home. From the red glazed tile at the doorway, to the unique Wrightian furniture, the house exemplifies the continuity of design for which Wright was famous. Wright designed not only the Laurent house, but also most of the freestanding and built-in furniture. Nearly every piece Wright designed is still in the home.

The Laurent's home is a harmonious marriage of the inside and the outside, a concept that Wright began when he was building his Prairie Style homes half a century earlier. The red cement floor continues under the home's walls to form the sidewalk around the house. The plaster ceilings in the home appear to continue outside the windows to become the underside of the home's eaves. The same light boxes that illuminate the inside are also found on the outside. The garden room's window wall arcs in as if to bring nature into the house. A low brick terrace wall gently arcs outward as if to extend the family's living space further into the yard. All of these important features are still found in the Laurent home today.

The Laurents continued their relationship with the Taliesin Fellowship even after Wright's death. They had four screens designed by Fellow Ling Po. Po was born in China and received his bachelor degree from the National Central University in Chunking. He came to the US in 1946 and joined the Taliesin Fellowship. Po was one of the chief artistic delineators for Wright, and later became one of the principles of Taliesin Associates Architects. The Laurent's hand-painted wooden floor screens designed by Po are Wright-inspired and reflect the original colors Wright chose for the Laurent home. The couple also had Po design a fireplace screen for them. The screen features an abstract of their floor plan. The fourth Po screen is a tabletop version. Planters, statuettes and other outdoor decoration are influenced by Wright designs. The Laurents stated there was no reason to change the home because it was designed so perfectly.

Laurent, Kenneth and Phyllis, House
Name of Property

Winnebago County IL
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- [ ] A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- [ ] B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- [x] C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- [ ] D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- [ ] A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- [ ] B removed from its original location.
- [ ] C a birthplace or grave.
- [ ] D a cemetery.
- [ ] E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- [ ] F a commemorative property.
- [ ] G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1951-1960

Significant Dates

1951-original house constructed

1960-contributing addition built

Significant Person
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Original House

Architect: Wright, Frank Lloyd

Builder: Johnson, Harry V.

1960 Addition

Architect: Howe, John

Period of Significance (justification)
Period of significance begins when the original house was completed and ends when the addition was constructed.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary) N/A

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

The Kenneth and Phyllis Laurent House qualifies for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C for architecture as the work of a master. It is the only Rockford, Illinois residence designed by the internationally renowned architect, Frank Lloyd Wright. Wright revolutionized modern architecture with his use of creative construction techniques, non-traditional building materials, unique floor plans, and outstanding artistic designs. The Laurent house is locally significant as an excellent example of Wright's hemicycle Usonian architecture. The period of significance is from 1951, the year it was built, until 1960, construction date for the contributing addition. Kenneth and Phyllis Laurent, the home's only owner-occupants, meticulously cared for the house and property resulting in an example of Wright's later work that exhibits excellent integrity.

Master Architect: Frank Lloyd Wright

Frank Lloyd Wright is widely regarded as one of America's most influential architects. Wright was born in 1867 to Russell and Anna Wright. His father was a Unitarian minister and music teacher and his mother was a teacher. From an early age, Wright's mother surrounded him with architectural images and toys to stimulate his imagination. In 1876, Anna gave her son a set of Froebel gifts, a kit consisting of wooden building blocks in geometric shapes and brightly colored pieces of paper. By Wright's own admission, those building blocks influenced his work years later.

Wright began studying engineering at the University of Wisconsin, but dropped out to pursue a career in architecture. He traveled to Chicago and found work at the office of Joseph Silsbee, a family friend. In less than a year he took another position working as a draftsman for the architectural firm of Adler and Sullivan. Here Wright met Louis Sullivan, a man he would later consider one of his mentors. Wright became a principle assistant and handled much of the firm's residential work. During this time, he also built a home in Oak Park for himself and his new wife, Catherine. Wright gained individual recognition and before long began moonlighting on his own commissions. His actions resulted in his dismissal in 1893. Wright responded by starting his own firm.

Wright and a number of designers rented office space in Steinway Hall, a building located in the Chicago Loop. During this period, Wright focused on designing homes that he felt blended well with the mid-western landscape. The unique architectural style drew from the Arts and Crafts movement and came to be known as the Prairie Style. Wright's residential Prairie Style homes were created for middle to upper-income clients and often varied greatly in their size and detail. The homes did have one similarity, the overall low profile and horizontal orientation. Wright emphasized the horizontal plane in these homes by minimizing the roof pitch and extending the roofline well beyond the walls of the house to create deep eaves. Wright also preferred to use bands of windows arranged in a ribbon fashion. Many times he specified orick construction, using bricks that were narrower and wider than ordinary. He would further emphasize the horizontal lines by having the mason make the mortar joints flush on the vertical, but raked on the horizontal line. Prairie homes had many details found in Craftsman style houses. For instance, the fireplace was the center of the home and the design often included handcrafted details such as art tile and art glass windows. Other architects of the period created beautiful Prairie Style buildings, but it is Frank Lloyd Wright who is most closely linked and credited with the creation of the style.

During the early 1900s Wright received many commissions for residential work in Illinois including the Susan Lawrence Dana house (1902) in Springfield, the Thomas H. Gale residence (1904) in Oak Park, the Frederick C. Robie home (1906) in Chicago. Wright's professional career flourished. He worked from his Oak Park studio and designed many homes in the area.

In 1909, Wright left his spouse and children to travel to Europe with the wife of one of his clients. The couple spent time in Germany, Italy, and France. Wright worked on a book of his designs and his companion, Mamah Cheney, studied and translated. While the couple lived overseas, the press had a heyday with the affair. Both the Cheney and Wright families endured scandalous newspaper headlines. When the couple returned, Wright and Cheney retreated to a new home Wright designed in Spring Green, WI. Wright named the home Taliesin.

Tragedy struck in 1914. Wright's companion Mamah Cheney, her two children, and several other staff members were brutally murdered by a Taliesin servant. Taliesin was also set afire and most of the home burned to the ground. In the years that followed, Wright immersed himself in his work and set about rebuilding Taliesin. Two of Wright's larger commercial commissions were completed around this time. The first was Midway Gardens (1913-1914), a large entertainment venue on Chicago's south side. The other was the Imperial Hotel, commissioned in 1916. The architect spent nearly a decade working on the hotel and traveling to and from Japan between the years of 1916 and 1922. The Imperial project presented Wright with a number of challenges. First and foremost, Wright wanted the hotel to reflect his ideas regarding organic architecture, but he also wanted to create a beautiful landmark respectful of Japanese tradition. Wright's other challenge was to make the building quakeproof. A year after the hotel's completion, Wright's design was

put to the test. Tokyo had an earthquake that registered 8.3 on the Richter scale. While the quake destroyed most of the city, Wright's Imperial Hotel appeared to have withstood the disaster and remained standing. Wright created a floating foundation for the hotel and anchored it with steel rods. The foundation did not function as well as the architect had hoped; but other innovative considerations kept the building standing. Wright specified separation joints every 20 meters on the building's walls. He also tapered the wall, keeping them thicker at the bottom for added strength. Wright cantilevered floors and balconies for added support and balance. He chose lightweight copper tile for the roof so the building would not be top-heavy. Wright received praise from his colleagues, the press and the public when word got out that the Imperial was still standing (Wright, "The Future of Architecture" 322-30).

The Imperial Hotel marked the beginning of what has been called Wright's Decorated Period (1913-1929). He began experimenting with new and unusual building materials. The Imperial was constructed of soft lava known as Oya stone. In California, Wright explored the use of poured concrete and concrete block. One of his better-known Los Angeles designs was the Hollyhock House (1917). The Mayan-influenced home is constructed of poured concrete. The Hollyhock house was a real departure from his Prairie Style homes, exotic in its details and following a more Art Deco form. Later, Wright designed the Mrs. George Millard residence (1923), made of cast concrete block.

The stock market crashed in 1929, followed by the Great Depression. Across the nation construction slowed, and so did work for Wright. During this time Wright produced his autobiography and a number of different writings. He and his second wife, Olgivanna, founded the Taliesin Fellowship in Spring Green, a unique school where students could live, work, and study with the master.

By the mid-30s, Wright turned his attention to even more creative and experimental designs. In 1935, Edgar J. Kaufmann approached Wright and asked him to design a new home. Wright's design for Kaufmann, Fallingwater, catapulted his career. Wright used large cantilever slabs that projected over natural formations, including a waterfall. The home became one with the rustic Pennsylvania hillside. It is generally considered Wright's quintessential example of harmonizing the built environment with its natural surroundings.

Wright furthered his reputation for engineering ingenuity with his design for the S.C. Johnson Wax Company in 1936. In the administration-building plan, Wright specified dendriform columns, only 9 inches in diameter at the base, to support the roof of the nearly two-story tall atrium. Wright was asked to prove the column's strength for building inspectors before a construction permit was issued. The resulting workspace was filled with natural light and organic forms.

Usonian Architecture

In the 1930s, Wright began working on a project he called Broadacre City. This was Wright's first venture into urban planning, and he envisioned a decentralized community where homes would be set on one-acre parcels. Acknowledging the popularity of the automobile, Wright spread his planned community throughout the countryside and concluded that this way of living demanded a new type of residential structure. He pictured a home, organic in nature, which would take advantage of the rural setting and the land on which it was built. Additionally, the homes would need to be affordable for the average middle-class American. In order to do this, Wright proposed eliminating higher cost items found in traditional housing. The floor plans were set up on consistent modules to allow for repetition and reduce waste. Wright called this concept home a Usonian.

The first Usonian was built for Herbert and Katherine Jacobs of Madison Wisconsin in 1936. It was an L-shaped plan with an open living space and two bedrooms. The Usonian turned its back to the street, but opened up in the rear giving the owners a view of their property. The cost of the 1500 square foot home was $5,500. The plans for the first Jacobs' house were later publicized in the January 1938 edition of *Architectural Forum.*

In 1936, Wright designed the Paul R. Hanna House in Palo Alto, California, his first Usonian using a hexagonal design. Wright continued to experiment with various geometric shapes for his Usonian commissions. One of Wright's first circular home designs was the Jester house. The home was not built at the time, but a modified version was constructed a number of years after Wright's death. Wright revisited the circular plan on several occasions, and employed it very successfully in a second home he built for Katherine and Herbert Jacobs in 1943-45. Instead of complete circles, Wright used only the arcs of a circle. Wright sited the home so as to capture the warmth of the sun during the winter months and to use the natural landscape, a berm, to buffer against the cold Wisconsin winds. The wide eaves of the Usonian helped shade the house from direct sunlight in the summer months. Large windows and doors could be opened to capture summer breezes. He called the second Jacobs' home a solar-hemicycle, named for the arc-shaped plan and the energy-efficient features he employed. Wright went on to use the circle or arc as a basis for a number of his residential commissions including, among others, the Meyer house (1948), the Pearce house (1950), and the David Wright house (1952). Wright's work with circular shapes and spirals culminated in his famous design for the Guggenheim Museum in New York City.

Wright's early Usonian homes set the stage for later national housing trends in the 1940s, 50s, and 60s. A severe housing shortage followed WWII. Government programs were established aimed at increasing the availability of housing to meet the country's growing demand. Subdivisions began springing up on the outskirts of cities all over the nation. At the time, the public desired more informal living spaces. Automobiles held a place of importance in most people's lives, and the average family wanted a dedicated place for their car. Developers and builders answered the demand for affordable and informal modern housing with the simple ranch and with prefabricated homes.

As builders and architects were identifying trends in new housing during the early 1950s, Wright had already used some of these same principals in his Usonian houses. Wright eliminated expensive features like basements and replaced garages with carports. Wright went a step further and eliminated some interior walls for what he considered to be non-essential rooms. The open floor plan was Wright's answer to the new call for informal living spaces. What Wright did not eliminate was interior detail. Detail for Wright was not the molding and trim found in more traditional housing. Wright's detail was found in the building materials themselves, in the surface of the walls and floors and the play of light in the spaces. His Usonian homes were not overly ornamental, but they were visually stimulating interiors featuring fine craftsmanship. Unlike many ranch homes, Wright interiors were vibrant and rich. He used deep, warm colors for his floors. Partition walls constructed of rich, radiant woods like Red Tidewater Cypress or Philippine Mahogany often enhanced the homes. Wright borrowed from nature for his exterior designs and specified materials such as limestone and brick. Unlike the typical ranch home of the late 40s and 50s, the Wright Usonians turned their back to the street. This meant more than installing large windows in the back; often the only windows found on the "front" of the home were small clerestory windows near the roofline. The Laurent House is the only example of Wright's work in Rockford and is a wonderful example of his Usonian architecture. Wright made a career of merging architecture with the natural environment and Wright's Usonians set a new standard for affordable beauty.

The Laurents and Frank Lloyd Wright

Kenneth Laurent was born in a small town in Northern Illinois in 1919. His father was half French and half German and his mother's family was Norwegian. He moved to Rockford in 1937 and worked as a statistician for the National Lock Corporation. In Rockford, he met and married Phyllis Carman.

Mr. Laurent served in the Navy during WWII and returned home on March 17th, 1946. Less than two months after his return, Kenneth experienced severe pain in his midsection and lost feeling in both of his legs. On May 30th, 1946, Mr. Laurent was diagnosed with a spinal cord tumor. That same evening he underwent surgery at Swedish American hospital. The surgeon that operated, Dr. Behr, was able to successfully remove the tumor, but unfortunately Kenneth never regained full use of his legs.

Mr. Laurent spent the next five months in a fracture bed. In October of 1946, he was transferred to the Hines VA hospital in Chicago for rehabilitation. During this time, Phyllis lived with her family in Rockford, and Kenneth would occasionally come home on the weekends to visit. For the next year and a half, the couple lived life one day at a time. In June 1948, the government passed the *Specially Adapted Housing Program* legislation. Public Law No. 80-702 provided disabled veterans, like Kenneth, a grant for fifty percent of the costs to purchase, build, or modify existing housing to accommodate their disability. With the promise of government assistance, Kenneth and Phyllis began to think about building a place to live together.

That summer Mrs. Laurent received a gift subscription to the magazine *House Beautiful.* Her very first issue featured an article written by Loren Pope entitled "The Love Affair of a Man and his House." The feature article was a glowing tribute to the home Frank Lloyd Wright had designed for the author. The Pope home was located in Falls Church, Virginia and built in 1940. The article described the home's open floor plan and convenient built-ins. In one passage the author writes, "The simplicity and order of the whole plan make it just as easy to put things away as to scatter them. Things are in the wardrobes or their drawers because they are handy. The simplicity also gives a well-ordered look. For the most part, the interior just can't be messy. Practically everything is built in, so there aren't a lot of places for dust to gather" (Pope 80). Mrs. Laurent immediately recognized that this type of a home could work for the two of them.

Phyllis called Kenneth to tell him about the article and showed him the magazine the next weekend he was home to visit. Mr. Laurent recalls he also was impressed by the open floor plan and went back to the hospital determined to find out more about the architect. Kenneth read Wright's autobiography and researched some of his other home designs. In the end, the couple decided to approach Wright about building their new home (Bachman Transcripts).

On August 23, 1948, Mr. Laurent composed a two-page letter to Mr. Wright. Mr. Laurent wrote: "To give you an idea of my situation, I must first tell you that I am a paraplegic. In other words due to a spinal-cord injury I am paralyzed from the waist down and by virtue of my condition I am confined to a wheelchair. This explains my need for a home as practical and sensible as your style of architecture denotes." Laurent went on to specify his needs and desires for the

house, along with his $20,000 dollar budget. On September 6, 1948, Laurent received a two-line response from Wright. The note stated, "We are interested but don't guarantee costs. Who knows what they are today."

A couple of weeks later Wright invited the couple to Taliesin in Spring Green, Wisconsin to discuss the project. At the meeting, Wright voiced concern over the lot the Laurents had selected. The property was located on the corner of Rural Street and Vale Avenue. It was a typical urban lot measuring 100 by 145 feet. Wright suggested that the couple "drive into the country about seven miles, and when you think you've found the right place, go another seven miles." Wright generally preferred for his clients to build homes in a rural location and encouraged them, when possible, to purchase acreage. In *The Future of Architecture*, Wright states, "Go to the country or go out in regional fields where ground is not yet exploited by the realtor. And it must go because to this house a garden is no backyard affair-an acre is necessary" (338). According to Mr. Laurent, the couple did as Wright suggested and drove seven miles into the country. There they found a large wooded lot backing up to a creek. The Laurents fell in love with the location and decided to stop there instead of venturing further. Wright sent his approval in January of 1949. "All right. Seems good."

As the weather began to improve, the Laurents wondered when they would see their house plans. Laurent recalls initiating several phone calls to Taliesin to inquire on the project's progress. He states he usually talked to Gene Masselink, Wright's secretary, who would assure him that Mr. Wright was thinking about the house plan. Then the secretary would calmly advise the Laurents to be patient. There is record of communication to Wright in March and May of 1949, illustrating the couple's growing anxiety.

The plan was finally drafted in July of 1949. Mr. Laurent states that on that evening Frank Lloyd Wright asked one of his apprentices to prepare his drawing board with paper. Then, when most of the students were attending choral practice at the Hillside Taliesin Theatre, Wright drew up the plan for the Laurent home. Kenneth goes on to say that Mr. Wright had apparently been thinking about the plan for some time. Kenneth Laurent laughs, "I guess what they said was true. Wright would mull over a design for months and months and then, one day, sit down and draw it out in a short period of time - shake it out of his sleeve, as they say." Mr. Laurent goes on to speculate that Wright must have been pleased with his work as he left it on the drawing board for a day or so, showing it to visitors who came to Taliesin to see him. He was heard to say, "How do you like this little gem?" The Laurents received final plans in August of 1949. The estimated cost was approximately $5000 more than their original budget. During the next year, Wright and the Laurents finalized the house plans. Bids for the job officially went out in August of 1950.

The Laurents hired Harry V. Johnson, a well-respected contractor from Rockford. Mr. Laurent recalls that Johnson worked on many of the nicer homes in the city. Mr. Laurent states his Mr. Johnson was a real professional and carried out Wright's design perfectly. Local companies provided materials and construction services for the project. Rinehimer Manufacturing Company milled the cypress trim and walls in the house. National Mirror Works constructed the custom windows on site. Carlson Roofing constructed the original flat roof and the home's brass hardware came from National Lock, Mr. Laurent's employer.

The project was supervised by John deKoven Hill (1920-1996), one of Wright's trusted apprentices. It was common practice for Wright to send one of his senior apprentices to supervise the work site. Hill was born in Cleveland, Ohio in 1920. He grew up in a Georgian House in Evanston and enrolled at Taliesin right out of high school. Hill was a member of the Taliesin Fellowship from 1937 to 1953 and served as site supervisor for 69 of Wright's houses (Sun Times, 1 July 1996). He was also a talented interior designer. Laurent states that Wright designed most of the furniture in the house, but Hill played an important role in specifying colors and fabrics. John Hill went on to serve as the Architectural Editor and then Editorial Director of *House Beautiful* under Editor in Chief, Elizabeth Gordon from 1953 to 1963. It is said that Gordon greatly appreciated Hill's work. Hill is credited with helping the magazine promote modern architecture and Wright's organic approach (Cort).

During the construction phase, the Laurents and Wrights became friends. Beginning in 1950, the Laurents would periodically travel to Spring Green. During their visits they would look over blueprints for Wright's latest projects posted on the wall of the studio. They would often stay for the evening and dine with the Wrights, occasionally taking in a concert or a movie.

The Laurents continued their relationship with the Wrights even after the home was built. Wright reciprocated visits, stopping on his way from Chicago to Spring Green. Mr. Laurent recalls the first time Wright saw the house after it was built. He drove to Rockford with John Hill and Edgar Kaufmann, Jr. The three men had lunch with Mr. and Mrs. Laurent and their builder, Harry Johnson (Bachman Transcripts).

Wright also came to the Laurent home after the arrival of their children. An anecdote that Laurent liked to tell concerns Marc, his son. "Little Laurent", as Wright referred to him, was in his playpen near the window as Wright entered one afternoon. Placing his tam on the child's head, he shook his tiny hand and said; "Now you can tell your grandchildren that you shook the hand of the man that shook the hand of Sullivan" (Olafson, "Usonian" 14).

After the Laurent family had expanded, Kenneth and Phyllis began to think about an addition for their home. In 1958, they returned to Wright to draw up working sketches. Wright agreed to design the Laurent addition. The Laurents did not accept the first set of plans drawn up by Wright and unfortunately he died before workable plans were completed. The addition was built in 1960, the year after Wright's death, and was completed and supervised by John (Jack) Howe.

Howe (1913-1997) was an Evanston, IL native. He became one of the first Taliesin students, joining the Fellowship in 1932. Howe worked on hundreds of Wright's architectural renderings and became his chief draftsman in 1937. After Wright's death, Howe completed designs and executed additions for a number of Wright-designed homes. Some Howe-designed additions include the E. Clark and Julie Arnold house in Columbus, WI; the Robert Levin home in Kalamazoo, MI; the Andrew Armstrong home in Ogden Dunes, IN; and the Robert Sunday house in Marshalltown, IA. In the late 1960s, Howe and his wife moved to Minnesota and he opened his own firm where he continued to design Wright-inspired buildings until he retired in 1992 (Biographical Dictionary of Cincinnati Architects 1788 – 1940).

The Laurent addition was masterfully planned and executed to the last detail. The Laurents even hired the son of the original contractor to build the addition. Care was taken to match original materials and the quality craftsmanship. The result is an addition that is almost impossible to distinguish or detect. Philosophically speaking, the addition did not take anything away from the original Wright design. In his 1932 autobiography, Wright stated: "Take comfort in the thought that architecture, too, is a flux, a rapidly changeable working of principle in the world's workshop-manifest in one form today, tomorrow in another." Specifically referring to his Usonian designs, Wright states: "A Usonian home, if built for a young couple, can, without deformity, be expanded later, for the needs of a growing family...the wing can go on for as many children as you can afford to put in it" (Wright, "A Natural House" 168). To this point, Wright oversaw a number of additions and remodels in his Usonian houses. One of the first was the Rosenbaum House in Florence, AL, enlarged ten years after it was built. Wright also planned the Paul Hanna house in Stanford, CA with removable walls so that the floor plan could be altered, as their children grew older.

The Laurent Home and Its Significance

In his 1954 book, *The Natural House*, Frank Lloyd Wright calls Usonian Houses the answer to "America's small house problem." Wright believed they fulfilled the need for a beautiful living space at a moderate price. Although this was the rationale for the Usonian, the houses did have defining physical characteristics.

Beginning with his first home for the Jacobs, Wright identified elements of traditional housing that he considered unnecessary, and eliminated them in his Usonians. Like the first Jacob's commission, the Laurent House does not have a visible roof; instead it is flat. Other "unnecessary" items eliminated from the Laurent House are the traditional garage and basement. There is a minimum of freestanding furniture in the Laurent House; Wright incorporated plenty of built-in storage and furniture into the house plan. The Laurent House uses "gravity heat," the heating method Wright preferred for his Usonians eliminating the need for radiators (90).

As important as it was to Wright to eliminate unnecessary items to keep down costs, Wright also insisted that his Usonians include certain design elements. Wright's Usonians characteristically used the same materials on both the inside and outside of the house. In the case of the Laurent House, those materials are brick and cypress. Wright's Usonian plans nearly always called for fireplaces, a feature of the Laurent House. Wright's Usonians had open floor plans. This not only helped with costs by eliminating unnecessary walls and doors, it also helped create a feeling of spaciousness in a relatively small home. The intersecting arcs and rectangles of the Laurent House create an interesting and open interior space.

Additionally, Wright added to the spacious feel of his Usonians by designing the homes to take advantage of the vista and open to the outside. He achieved this in a variety of ways, experimenting with various shapes but perhaps one of the most successful plans was the hemicycle. The idea for a solar-hemicycle was first realized in the Jacobs' second home. John Sergeant states that the hemicycle demonstrated "Wright's growing interest in flowing architecture, free from the right angle" (Sergeant 83). As previously stated, the Laurent home incorporated many of the features of the solar-hemicycle including the berm on the street-side of the house and the concave wall of windows on the back. The Laurent House was Wright's first single story using the hemicycle form. Although the window wall is not located where it would receive the maximum passive solar heat in the winter months, it is situated so that it best takes advantage of the views provided by the one-plus acre lot.

Finally, the Laurent House is constructed using Wright's Usonian money-saving ideas. It is based on a repetitive three-foot grid system. The walls in the house are mere curtains, utilizing sandwiched plywood- in this case cypress. This type of wall eliminated the need for plaster or traditional trim. The board and batten wall construction became signature for Wright Usonians. Fortunately, all of the identifying hemicycle Usonian features have been preserved in the Laurent House and it stands as an excellent local example of this period in Wright's career.

As such, the Laurent home has appeared in a number of books, journals, and articles over the years. Shortly before his death, Mr. Wright sorted various drawings of buildings and objects for Edgar J. Kaufman, Jr. to be published in a book entitled *Drawings For a Living Architecture.* Mr. Wright chose the Laurent House for inclusion. Kaufman refers to the home as a "small, serene masterwork." In 1993, Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer included the Laurent house and 37 other projects in his book *Frank Lloyd Wright-The Masterworks.* Wright chose to highlight the Laurent House in his book, *The Natural House.* Wright placed a photo, sketch and floor plan of the house in the chapter entitled "Grammar: The House as a Work of Art."

Besides numerous references in a variety of publications, the Laurent house has also had its share of visitors. In 1992 Travel Plan of Tokyo, through the Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy, approached the Laurents for permission to visit the home. The tour was called the *Frank Lloyd Wright Friendship Tour.* The group has since visited the Laurent home eight times. The Laurents have entertained visitors since the home's construction. Wright, himself, often suggested Taliesin visitors stop at the Laurent home if their travels took them through Rockford. The Laurents keep a guest book with signatures of all their visitors. Mr. Laurent laments that he and Phyllis only had the idea to keep track of guests about 30 years ago, so the book does not go back to the home's construction. Still, the book has pages and pages of names of those who have come calling over the years and it stands as a testament to the intrigue sparked by Frank Lloyd Wright-designed homes.

Conclusion

The Kenneth and Phyllis Laurent House qualifies for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C with a period of significance from 1951 – 1960. It is the only Rockford residence designed by master architect Frank Lloyd Wright. The house is locally significant as a well-preserved, intact example of a one-story, hemicycle and stands as a testament to Wright's ingenuity and forward-thinking concepts. Kenneth and Phyllis Laurent lived in their Wright-designed home for over half a century. The Laurents' keen perception of their residential needs and Wright's innovative designs seem to have been a perfect match.

Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

Modern Movement in Rockford

The Laurent House, while unique as the only example of Usonian architecture in Rockford, is part of the larger trend of postwar housing and modern architecture that was occurring across the country. Like other areas, Rockford experienced a tremendous building boom following WWII. The local economy was bolstered during the war, due in part to the temporary influx of soldiers from Camp Grant, a large army induction center on the southern edge of town. Rockford's manufacturing facilities also prospered during the war by producing military supplies. By the end of the war, Rockford was poised for growth.

Rockford followed national trends and developed many new subdivisions in the late 1940s and 50s. The city boundaries grew as the new subdivisions were annexed. The developers of these subdivisions often offered stock house plans or prefabricated housing to keep costs low. Homes, like those found in the Montague Heights neighborhood, were usually simple, one-story ranches with a rectangular or L-shaped plan. Most of houses had attached garages and were sited on average city lots measuring 50' by 150'. The houses were nearly always oriented to the street, even if the roads in the subdivision deviated from the standard grid street pattern. The garage, often attached, became a prominent feature and might even be decorated with diamond, chevron, or star patterns. Builders took advantage of large factory produced plate glass windows and put these in the front of the home looking out to the street. Many of the non-essential architectural features of the past were eliminated, like the basement and the fireplace.

A variation of the ranch was the Lustron House, and a number of these prefabricated houses were built in Rockford around this time. The enameled steel homes debuted in 1948, but the company was short-lived and went out of business by 1950. Of the estimated 2,500 Lustrons built in the United States, 20 have been identified in Rockford (Olafson, "Postwar Prefab").

For those in Rockford who could afford an architect-designed house during the mid-twentieth century, it was not unusual to look back instead of forward; the Colonial Revival was a popular choice. The house located at 2326 Harlem Blvd. is a good example. The modified, one and a half-story Colonial Revival home was designed by A. Reyner Eastman, a local architect, for Trahern Ogilby in 1953. The exterior and interior of the house exhibited features common in traditional housing from the 1920s including extensive trim, dormers, and bay windows.

Some local architects designed ranches. An early 1950s home, located in the same neighborhood as the Laurent House, exemplifies the architect-designed "rambling ranch." Charles A. Boettcher designed the 4849 Birch Ave.

residence for Warren Froelich. Boettcher specified natural materials, limestone and wood, for its construction. The architect angled the house to the road and nestled it amongst the trees on the large lot. At the time Boettcher was quoted as saying, "I try to produce a feeling of relationship between the house and the outdoors as to its setting and interior arrangement." Like Wright, Boettcher placed large expanses of glass in the rear of the house. He was quoted as saying 4 out of 5 homes he designed had this configuration. Although Boettcher and other architects were embracing the concept of backyard views, few actually oriented the house in this manor. Most continued to use traditional windows on the front of the home and a centralized front entry off the street.

Another mid-century modern Rockford home can be found at 920 King Street. Wisconsin architect, John Steinman, designed the Pearman residence in 1951. The house was located on a reconditioned lot and stood apart from its more traditional neighbors. It was constructed of cypress and brick, like the Laurent House, and the interior was an open plan with minimal doors. The back of the house was lined with windows, allowing for a view of the garden. The home had an exposed lower level in front that housed the garage and the entrance to the living space was located on the side. Even so, the house featured a prominent balcony across the front that overlooked the street, and did not compare to the Laurent Usonian in its overall form or site placement. Recently the Cypress exterior of the Pearman House has been covered with white aluminum, greatly altering its original appearance. There are a limited number of other modern movement examples in Rockford including a few in the Art Deco and Art Moderne Style, but the ranch, and its various forms, was the modern house of choice and the most predominant in Rockford.

Accessibility in Home Design

When the Laurents approached Frank Lloyd Wright about designing their home, they were hoping the architect could create a place where Kenneth would have the opportunity to live independently. They were not drawn to Wright because of his high profile status, but rather his unique way of thinking and designing for the way people lived in their homes. When WWII came to a close, over 16.3 million Americans had served. There were 407,000 American deaths attributed to the war, and another 671,000 wounded. Many of the wounded had suffered spinal cord injuries. During World War I only about 2 percent of veterans with spinal cord injuries survived more than a year; but by World War II, the survival rate for spinal cord injuries was up 85% due to the advances of modern medicine. The increased survival rate meant that there were many who returned to civilian life forced to live with life-altering disabilities.

Overall, there is a shortage of literature that discusses architect-designed, accessible-housing during the first three quarters of the twentieth century. One of the only residential handicapped-accessible homes written about with some frequency is Hill-Top Cottage in Hyde Park, NY, a vacation retreat designed in 1938 by and for President Franklin D. Roosevelt. In the Historic National Landmark nomination for the property, the author states that Hill-Top Cottage was designed to include a number of features to accommodate the President's wheelchair. The considerations included locating all of the main living spaces on the first floor, creating wide doorways, and installing a sliding glass door to access the porch. Properties designed for inhabitants with disabilities such as Hill-Top Cottage and the Laurent Home appear to have been few and far between. During this time period, accessibility solutions usually focused on building modifications such as wooden ramps for stairs or first floor bathroom additions. More often than not, wheelchair users became prisoners in their own homes.

After the First World War, the disability-rights movement was mainly focused on helping veterans re-enter the work force, but after WWII the movement's agenda grew and gained momentum. Specialized groups like the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) and the Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) were founded. These groups made it their mission to promote equality amongst and for their constituents. In the 1960s, the disability- rights movement adopted strategies similar to those used by the civil-rights movement, protesting in the streets and challenging the law in the courtrooms.

One of the architectural leaders in the accessibility movement was Selwyn Goldsmith (1932-2011). Goldsmith was from England. He studied architecture at Cambridge University and also at the Bartlett School of the University College London. After graduating, Goldsmith contracted polio that left him paralyzed on one side of his body. In 1961, Goldsmith worked with the Royal Institute of British Architects and the Polio Research Fund to compile information for Goldsmith's 1963 groundbreaking book, *Designing for the Disabled*. It has been said that this book and its 1967 revision became the basis and model for accessibility standards all over the world.

The private sector model for technical architectural standards, in regards to accessible features, was the American National Standard Institute's (ANSI) *Accessible and Usable Buildings and Facilities*, released in 1961. Public policy followed in 1968 when Congress passed the *Architectural Barriers Act.* This required that any facility that utilized Federal funds for design, building, remodeling, or leasing, must meet established accessibility standards. It was one of the first legislative efforts to expand accessibility to all in our built environment. Section 504 of the *1973 Rehabilitation Act*

and, almost two decades later, the *Americans with Disabilities Act* continued to promote equity to access and employment for all Americans.

Because of legislation and the work of the disability-rights movement, we now have a better understanding and awareness of access discrimination in our built world. In recent years there has been a trend towards designing products and environments that are usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without adaptation. The seven principles of "Universal Design," as it has come to be called, include: equitable use, flexibility in use, simple and intuitive use, perceptible information, tolerance for error, low physical effort, and size and space for approach and use (Center for Universal Design-NCSU).

One could argue that Frank Lloyd Wright used many of the principles of Universal Design in his Usonian homes. Wright designed single-space living areas with minimal walls and barriers. He typically used radiant heat, eliminating the need for radiators and heat ducts, objects that could easily impede mobility. He also replaced garages with carports giving more flexibility, easier egress and coverage from the car to house. Wright designed furniture and accessories that integrated with his home designs. His Usonian home's floors were generally constructed first so that there were smooth transitions from room to room and from the outside to the inside.

As Mr. and Mrs. Laurent recognized from the beginning, Wright's Usonian designs had key elements for which they were looking, but Wright went much further to accommodate Kenneth's needs when he designed the Laurent home. For example, Wright designed the Laurent shower stall larger than normal at 44 x 44 inches. The door openings are all 36 inches and wider, and light switches are mounted lower than what was considered standard at the time so they could be accessed from a wheelchair. He also placed some of the built-ins at a lower level so they were within easy reach, and then specified hinged doors so there were no bulky drawers with which to contend. The small tables and hassocks Wright designed for Laurents could be nestled away, keeping the home uncluttered and barrier-free. This house met all of the needs of a wheelchair-using person before designing for disabilities was even considered by architects, builders or the government. Built over half a century ago, the home comes close to meeting today's accessibility standards.

The Laurent home is an excellent example of an architect working to meet the needs of his client, and as such it is an early representation of thoughtful design to enable independent living. In 2009, the home was cited in a publication of *Paraplegic News*. The article used the Laurent story to illustrate the importance of finding the right architect and establishing a good working relationship with that designer in order to create an accessible home (Lopez 12). The Laurent home holds a special place in Wright's overall body of work for the way the architect masterfully combined his Usonian concepts into a single-story, energy-efficient, hemicycle plan artfully adapted to serve Mr. Laurent's needs for an wheelchair accessible house.

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Laurent, Kenneth and Phyllis, House
Name of Property

Winnebago County IL
County and State

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

____preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
____previously listed in the National Register
____previously determined eligible by the National Register
____designated a National Historic Landmark
____recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #_____

Primary location of additional data:

__x__State Historic Preservation Office: Previous NRHP nomination
____Other State agency
____Federal agency
____Local government
____University
__x__Other: The Laurent House Foundation-archival copies The Frank Lloyd Wright Archives: Scottsdale, AZ * See appendix for listing of items
The Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities: Los Angeles CA (correspondence)

____recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
____recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.3 acres
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

UTM References
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	16	333 175	4685045	3			
2				4			

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)
The property consists of two tax parcels, both irregular in shape.
Property code: 152D118
Legal Description: EXC WLY 65 FT TO HWY EXC PT IN CARRIAGE HILLS 1-1 & 6 EXC FIELDCREST SUB 1-2-3 & 4 EXC IRR TR TO ROGERS ANSTEDT & HALLOCK NW 1/4 SE 1/4 SEC SEC: 08 TWP: 044 RANGE: 002 ACRES: 0.42

Property code: 152D315
Legal Description: BOHLIN & JOHNSONS SPRING BROOK WOODS SUBD OF BLK E SW 1/4 SE 1/4 SEC 8-44-2 ELY 150 FT LOTS 1-2 & 3 ALSO WLY TRI TRACT (18.38 FT ON S LN) OF LOT 1 IN CHEROAKE WOODS SUBD 1 BK 1380-270)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)
The boundary includes the home and property currently associated with the Frank Lloyd Wright designed Kenneth and Phyllis Laurent house

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Pam Hein

organization Prepared for The Laurent House Foundation (owner) date 2-4-2012

street & number 1722 Harlem Blvd. 815-979-3241

telephone

city or town Rockford state IL zip code 61107

e-mail pamhein@sbcglobal.net

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

  A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all pnotographs to this map.

- **Continuation Sheets**

- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs:

Photo Log for Laurent House

*All photos available from The Laurent House Foundation, 4646 Spring Brook Rd., Rockford IL

IL_WinnebagoCounty_KennethandPhyllisLaurentHouse_0001
Photographer: Jerry Heinzeroth
Photo Taken: Summer 2008
Type: Digital photo
Orientation: Driveway facing northeast
1 of 23

IL_WinnebagoCounty_KennethandPhyllisLaurentHouse_0002
Jerry Heinzeroth
Summer 2008
Digital photo
Facing southeast
2 or 23

IL_WinnebagoCounty_KennethandPhyllisLaurentHouse_0003
Jerry Heinzeroth
Summer 2008
Digital photo
Facing southeast
3 of 23

IL_WinnebagoCounty_KennethandPhyllisLaurentHouse_0004
Jerry Heinzeroth
Summer 2008
Digital photo
Facing northeast
4 of 23

IL_WinnebagoCounty_KennethandPhyllisLaurentHouse_0005
Jerry Heinzeroth
Summer 2008
Digital photo
Detail of gutter system and exterior light box
5 of 23

IL_WinnebagoCounty_KennethandPhyllisLaurentHouse_0006
Jerry Heinzeroth
Summer 2008
Digital photo
Addition hall; facing southeast
6 of 23

IL_WinnebagoCounty_KennethandPhyllisLaurentHouse_0007
Blake Heinzeroth
Fall 2009
Digital photo
Bathroom in addition; facing southwest
7 of 23

IL_WinnebagoCounty_KennethandPhyllisLaurentHouse_0008
Blake Heinzeroth
Fall 2009
Digital photo
Addition bedroom; facing west
8 of 23

IL_WinnebagoCounty_KennethandPhyllisLaurentHouse_0009
Blake Heinzeroth
Fall 2009
Digital photo
Entry hall; facing west
9 of 23

IL_WinnebagoCounty_KennethandPhyllisLaurentHouse_0010
Blake Heinzeroth
Fall 2009
Digital photo
Curved glass wall; facing northwest
10 of 23

IL_WinnebagoCounty_KennethandPhyllisLaurentHouse_0011
Blake Heinzeroth
Fall 2009
Digital photo
Living space; facing southeast
11 of 23

IL_WinnebagoCounty_KennethandPhyllisLaurentHouse_0012
Blake Heinzeroth
Fall 2009
Digital photo
Living space; facing north
12 of 23

IL_WinnebagoCounty_KennethandPhyllisLaurentHouse_0013
Jerry Heinzeroth
Summer 2008
Digital photo
Addition dining space; facing northeast
13 of 23

IL_WinnebagoCounty_KennethandPhyllisLaurentHouse_0014
Jerry Heinzeroth
Summer 2008
Digital photo
Buffett/Kitchen pass-through; facing northeast
14 of 23

IL_WinnebagoCounty_KennethandPhyllisLaurentHouse_0015
Blake Heinzeroth
Fall 2009
Digital photo
Bedroom; facing southeast
15 of 23

IL_WinnebagoCounty_KennethandPhyllisLaurentHouse_0016
Jerry Heinzeroth
Summer 2008
Digital photo
Garden room/hall to master bedroom: facing north
16 of 23

IL_WinnebagoCounty_KennethandPhyllisLaurentHouse_0017
Jerry Heinzeroth
Summer 2008
Digital photo
Frank Lloyd Wright-designed tables and hassocks
17 of 23

IL_WinnebagoCounty_KennethandPhyllisLaurentHouse_0018
Jerry Heinzeroth
Summer 2008
Digital photo
Frank Lloyd Wright-designed chair
18 of 23

IL_WinnebagoCounty_KennethandPhyllisLaurentHouse_0019
Jerry Heinzeroth
Summer 2008
Digital photo
Ling Pao-designed screen
19 of 23

IL_WinnebagoCounty_KennethandPhyllisLaurentHouse_0020
Blake Heinzeroth
Fall 2009
Digital photo
Master bedroom; facing west
20 of 23

IL_WinnebagoCounty_KennethandPhyllisLaurentHouse_0021
Blake Heinzeroth
Fall 2009
Digital photo
Master bedroom fireplace and built-in desk; facing east
21 of 23

IL_WinnebagoCounty_KennethandPhyllisLaurentHouse_0022
Blake Heinzeroth
Fall 2009
Digital photo
Bathroom; facing west
22 of 23

IL_WinnebagoCounty_KennethandPhyllisLaurentHouse_0023
Blake Heinzeroth
Fall 2009
Digital photo
Shower and soaking tub; facing south
23 of 23

Property Owner:

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name The Laurent House Foundation

street & number 4646 Spring Brook Rd. telephone 815-877-2952

city or town Rockford state IL zip code 61114

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Appendix

Kenneth and Phyllis Laurent House
Name of Property Winnebago County, IL
County and State N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

IL_WinnebagoCounty_KennethandPhyllisLaurentHouse_Appendix_0001
Historic Photo of Laurent House Before Addition
Date and Source: Unknown

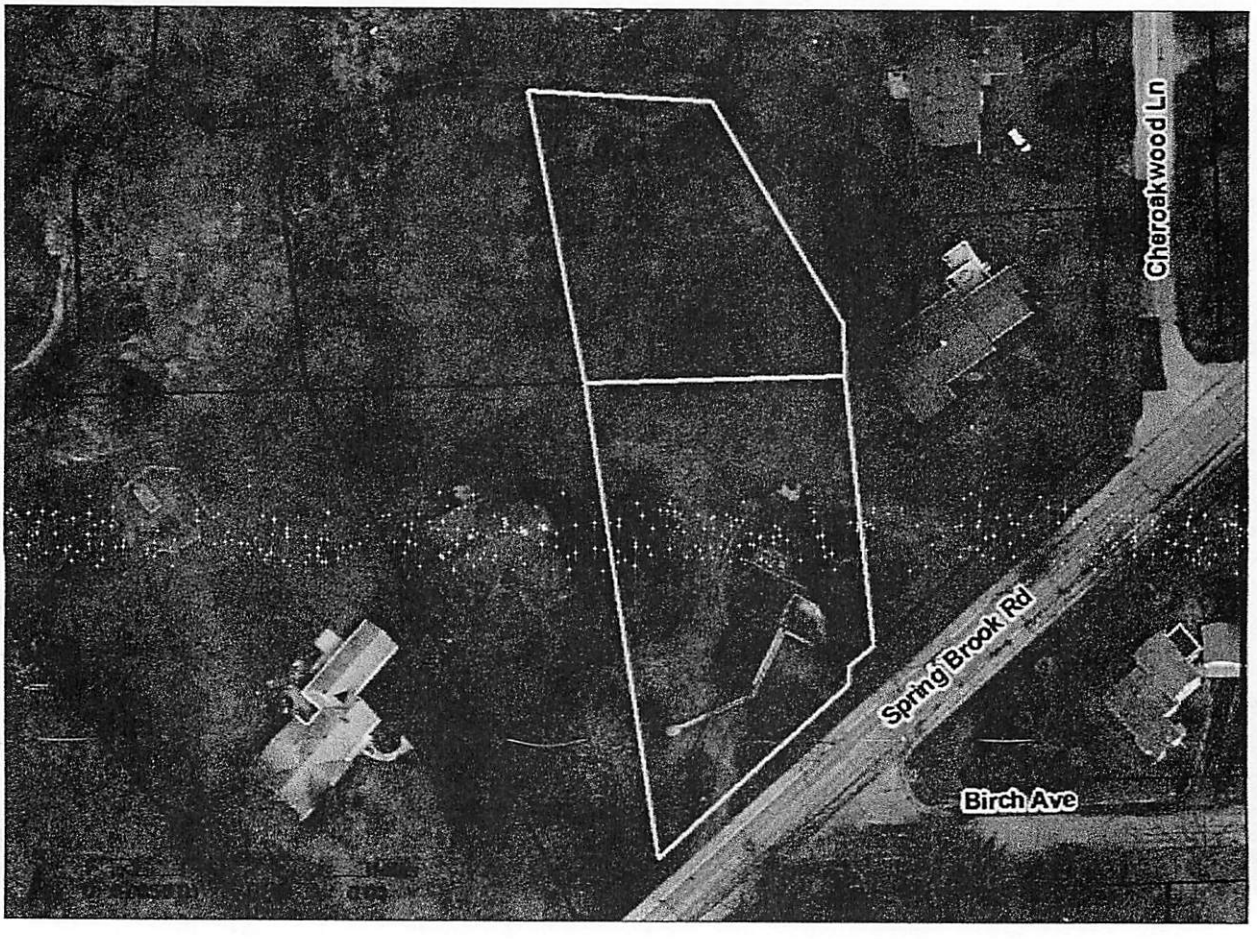
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Appendix

Kenneth and Phyllis Laurent House
Name of Property
Winnebago County, IL
County and State
N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

IL_WinnebagoCounty_KennethandPhyllisLaurentHouse_Appendix_0002
Site Map with Laurent Property Highlighted
Source: WINGIS



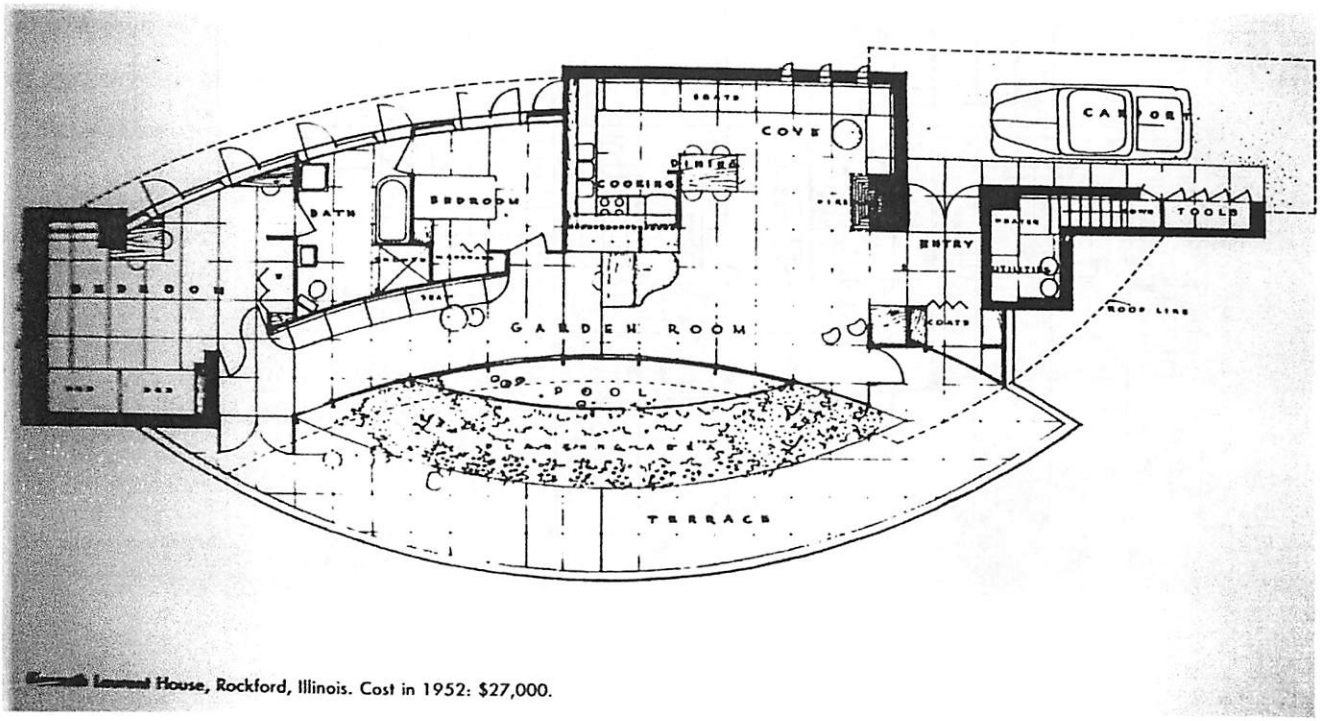
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Appendix

Kenneth and Phyllis Laurent House
Name of Property Winnebago County, IL
County and State N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

IL_WinnebagoCounty_KennethandPhyllisLaurentHouse_Appendix_0003
Original Laurent House Plan from *The Natural House*, page 184



House, Rockford, Illinois. Cost in 1952: $27,000.

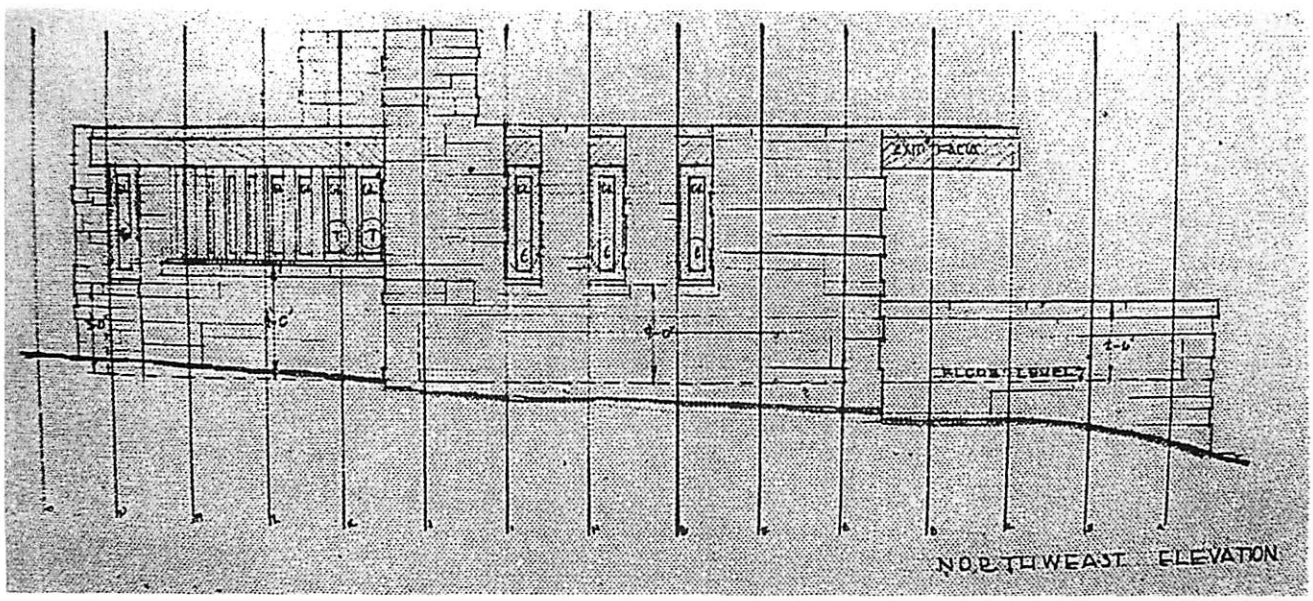
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Appendix

Kenneth and Phyllis Laurent House
Name of Property
Winnebago County, IL
County and State
N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

IL_WinnebagoCounty_KennethandPhyllisLaurentHouse_Appendix_0004
Northeast Elevation of Laurent House in Rockford, IL



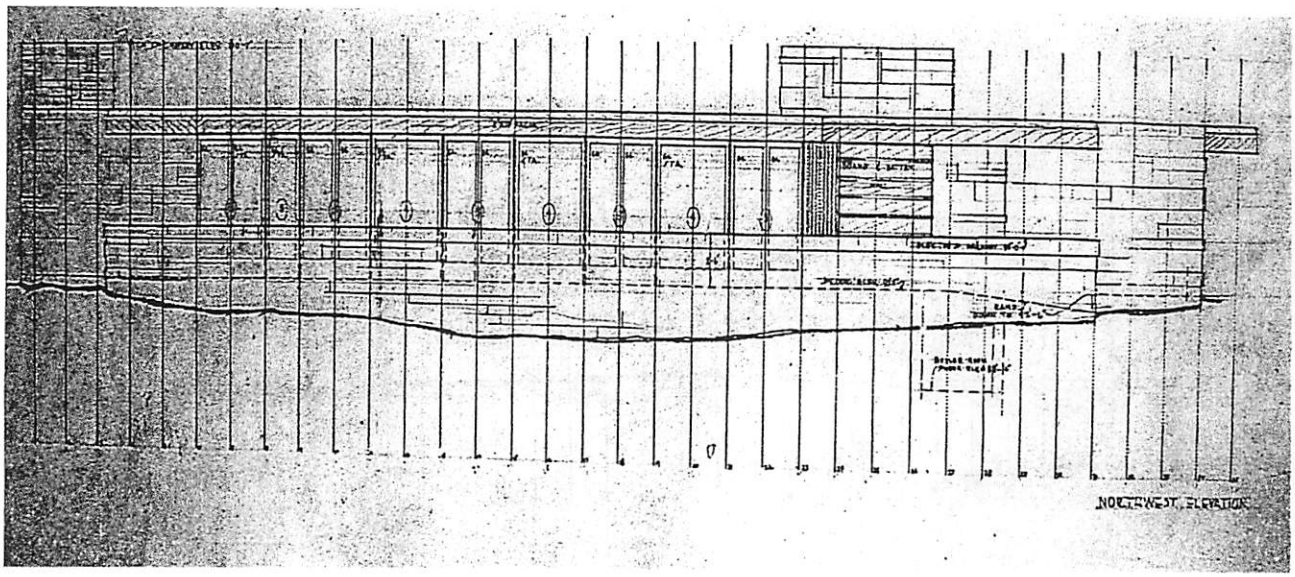
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Appendix

Kenneth and Phyllis Laurent House
Name of Property
Winnebago County, IL
County and State
N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

IL_WinnebagoCounty_KennethandPhyllisLaurentHouse_Appendix_0005
Northwest Elevation of Laurent House in Rockford, IL



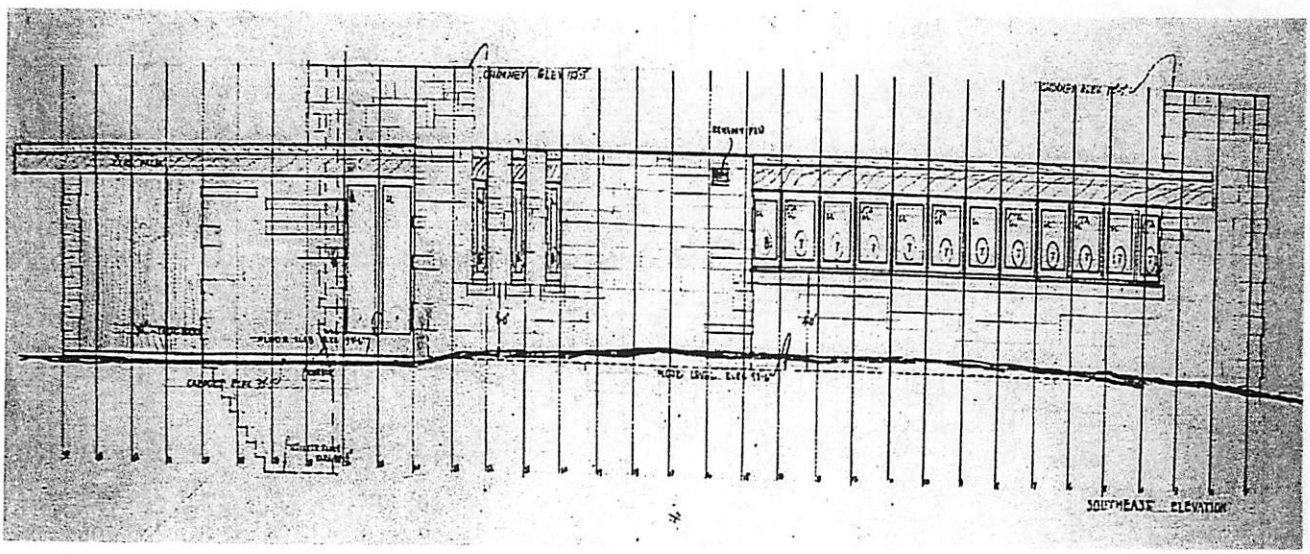
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Appendix

Kenneth and Phyllis Laurent House
Name of Property Winnebago County, IL
County and State N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

IL_WinnebagoCounty_KennethandPhyllisLaurentHouse_0006
Southeast Elevation of the Laurent House in Rockford, IL



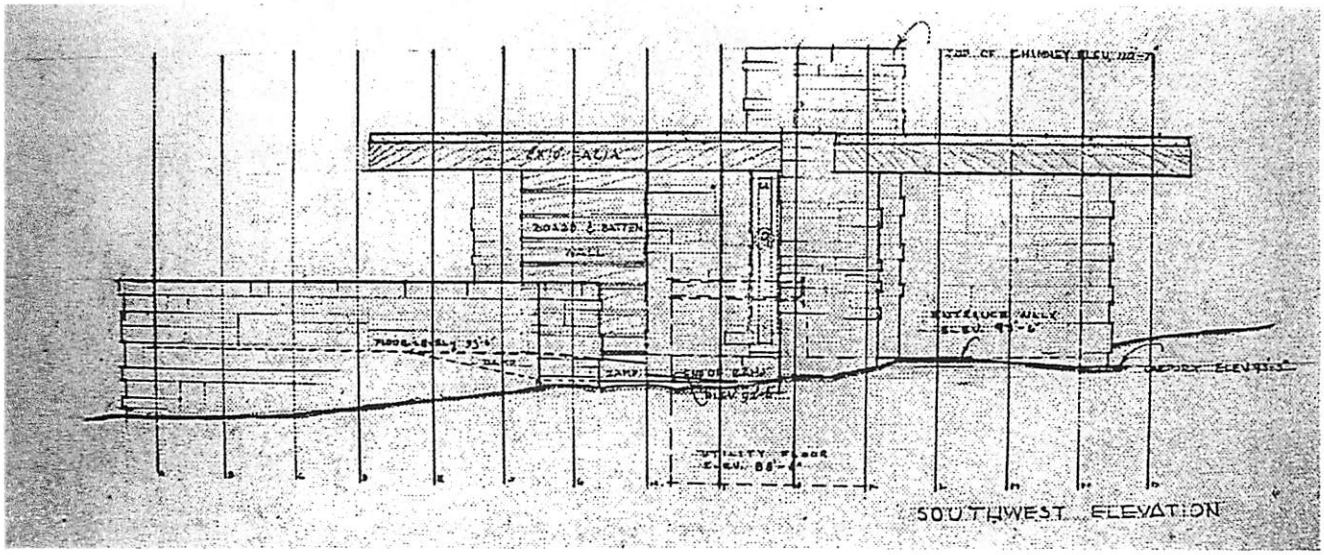
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Appendix

Kenneth and Phyllis Laurent House
Name of Property
Winnebago County, IL
County and State
N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

IL_WinnebagoCounty_KennethandPhyllisLaurentHouse_Appendix_0007
Southwest Elevation of Laurent House in Rockford, IL



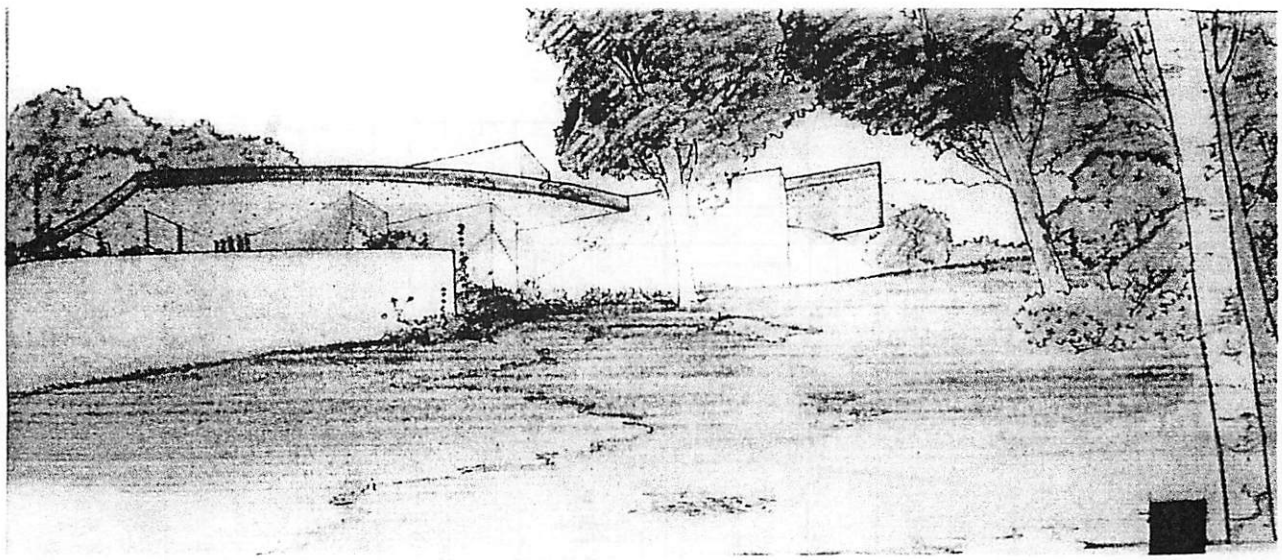
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Appendix

Kenneth and Phyllis Laurent House
Name of Property
Winnebago County, IL
County and State
N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

IL_WinnebagoCounty_KennethandPhyllisLaurentHouse_Appendix_0008
Laurent House Sketch from *The Natural House*, pages 182-183



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Appendix

Kenneth and Phyllis Laurent House
Name of Property
Winnebago County, IL
County and State
N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

IL_WinnebagoCounty_KennethandPhyllisLaurentHouse_0009
Laurent House Floor Plan Indicating 1960s Addition